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Letter dated 28 September 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a letter dated 16 September 2015 from Smaïl Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union Commission, conveying the conclusions of the first meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and Ministers of Defence of the member countries of the Nouakchott Process, held in Bamako from 2 to 4 September 2015 (see annex). Also transmitted with the letter are two communiqués issued by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan and on the activities of the African Union High-level Panel for Sudan and South Sudan, respectively.

I would be grateful if you could bring the letter and its enclosures to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

16 September 2015

On behalf of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, I would like to forward, herewith, the conclusions of the first meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and Ministers of Defence of the member countries of the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African peace and security architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, held in Bamako from 2 to 4 September 2015. The conclusions outline a number of steps aimed at enhancing operational security cooperation in the region. We look forward to working closely with the United Nations in the follow-up process of the conclusions.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to forward two communiqués of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union:

- Communiqué PSC/MIN/COMM.(DXXVI) on the report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, adopted by the 526th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 24 July 2015; and
- Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DXXXIX) on the activities of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan, adopted by the 539th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 25 August 2015.

I would be most grateful if the present letter and its enclosures, the Bamako conclusions and the two Peace and Security Council communiqués, could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Let me seize this opportunity to reiterate the African Union's appreciation to the United Nations and to you for your continued efforts towards the promotion of lasting peace and security on the continent, and support to the African Union peace and security agenda.

(*Signed*) Smaïl **Chergui**
Commissioner, Peace and Security

Enclosure I

Conclusions of the first meeting of Chiefs of Defence Staff and Ministers of Defence of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region, Bamako, 4 September 2015

[Original: English and French]

1. The 1st meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the member countries of the Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan Region was held in Bamako, Mali, on 4 September 2015. The meeting, which was preceded by preparatory meetings of experts and Chiefs of Defence Staff, on 2 and 3 September 2015, respectively, is part of the follow-up on the conclusions of the 3rd ministerial meeting of the countries of the region, held in Niamey, Niger, on 19 February 2014, and the Declaration of the 1st Summit of the Nouakchott Process, organized in the Mauritanian capital on 18 December 2014.

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Representatives of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the North Africa Regional Capacity, the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel, and the Fusion and Liaison Unit for the Sahel also participated in the meeting. Similarly, representatives of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Sahel, as well as the European Union, attended the meeting.

3. The opening ceremony was marked by the statements made by the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Special Representative of ECOWAS in Mali, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Mali and Head of MINUSMA and the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Sahel, as well as by the Minister of Defence and War Veterans of the Republic of Mali.

4. The meeting provided an opportunity to review the evolution of the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region and the efforts being deployed to address the challenges at hand. In this regard, the meeting considered modalities for the enhancement of operational cooperation among the countries of the region, especially through the systematization of joint border patrols, as well as through the establishment of mixed units involving military contingents. Similarly, the meeting considered the possibility of establishing an intervention force, which would operate in the northern part of Mali, and the issue of the strengthening of MINUSMA.

5. On the basis of the report submitted by the African Union Commission on the follow-up on the relevant provisions of the Declaration of the Summit of 18 December 2014 of the member countries of the Nouakchott Process, the report of the preparatory meeting of experts and the recommendations of the Chiefs of Defence Staff, as well as the exchange of views on the different agenda items of the meeting, participants agreed on the following:

On the evolution of the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region

6. Participants expressed concern about the evolution of the security situation in the region. They highlighted the attempt by the terrorist and criminal groups to regroup in the northern part of Mali and the increase in attacks against civilians, as well as against the Malian defence and security forces and the international forces present on the ground (MINUSMA and Barkhane). They further highlighted the spread of the terrorist threat to the central and southern parts of Mali, as evidenced by the attack along the Côte d'Ivoire-Mali border, in the Sikasso region, at the end of June 2015, and the hostage taking in Sevaré, near Mopti, in early August 2015.

7. Participants also expressed concern over the prevailing situation in Libya, where the collapse of State structures and the existence of a number of armed groups have facilitated the establishment of safe havens in some parts of the Libyan territory by terrorist groups, including the "Islamic State" terrorist group, as well as the intensification of illegal migration, with its attendant tragedies. They stressed the danger this situation continues to pose to security and stability in the region.

8. Participants reiterated the support of their respective countries and organizations to the ongoing stabilization efforts in the northern part of Mali, as well as to the implementation process of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers Process. They called upon all the signatory parties to honour their commitments, stressing that the scrupulous implementation of the Agreement will make it possible to further isolate the terrorist and criminal groups, thus facilitating their neutralization.

9. Participants welcomed the progress made by the member countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin towards the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force established to neutralize the Boko Haram terrorist group. They called for the intensification of the ongoing efforts and the mobilization of international assistance for the countries of the region, including financial resources, logistics and intelligence.

10. Participants noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the Nouakchott Process, particularly as regards its security cooperation aspects, with the regular convening of meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services (HISS) and other related activities. They called for the early implementation of the outstanding elements of the Operational Conclusions of the HISS meetings, as enumerated in the report of the Commission.

On the enhancement of operational security cooperation

11. Participants reiterated the commitment made by the countries of the region at the Niamey meeting and the Nouakchott Summit to enhance their operational cooperation, in the spirit of the relevant African Union instruments, particularly the Common African Defence and Security Policy and the Non-aggression and Common Defence Pact, adopted in February 2003 and March 2005, respectively. Against this backdrop, they underscored the relevance of joint border patrols and the establishment of mixed units by countries willing to do so, both of which constitute flexible tools for the pooling of capacities and resources in order to address the common challenges facing the countries of the region, while at the same time contributing to the deepening of regional integration. In this regard, they welcomed the steps taken within the region, both bilaterally and multilaterally,

stressing their complementarity with the overall efforts aimed at fully operationalizing the African Peace and Security Architecture, including the African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capacity.

12. Participants, having noted the key features of the generic concepts of operation for joint patrols and mixed units, as described in the report of the Commission, agreed on the following measures to enhance operational cooperation in the region:

- to ensure a shared assessment of the threats and risks in the Sahel region, as a prerequisite for more effective security cooperation, bearing in mind that these threats and risks could be categorized as follows: terrorism, organized crime (drug, arms and human trafficking), illegal immigration and irredentism;
- to initiate a continued process of lessons learned from existing initiatives, in order to enhance the effectiveness of joint patrols and facilitate the establishment of mixed units by countries willing to do so. In this regard, it was agreed to organize a mission to assess the existing arrangements in the region, which will culminate in the organization of a lessons learned workshop by the end of 2015;
- to organize a planning meeting before the end of 2015 to fine tune the generic concepts of operation for joint patrols and mixed units, as articulated in the report of the African Union Commission, as well as to prepare a generic African Union support concept for regional efforts towards operational cooperation;
- to encourage the countries of the region to establish, as necessary, modalities for enhanced operational cooperation on the basis of existing best practices. In this regard, participants requested the African Union, particularly through its High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, as well as the relevant Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, to sensitize the States about the importance of enhancing operational border cooperation;
- to request the countries that establish operational cooperation arrangements, in the form of joint patrols and mixed units, to notify the African Union and the relevant Regional Mechanisms, in order to facilitate the follow-up of ongoing initiatives and the mobilization of the necessary political support and resources;
- to promote civil-military actions in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime; and
- to involve representatives of Defence Staff Headquarters of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region in the meetings of the HISS, as from the next meeting of the HISS, scheduled to take place in Abuja, Nigeria, to further enhance coordination between intelligence collection and operational action.

On the establishment of an intervention force in the northern part of Mali and the enhancement of MINUSMA

13. Participants recalled that the Nouakchott Summit had expressed the full readiness of the countries of the region, in consultation with the United Nations, to contribute to the enhancement of MINUSMA, in particular through the establishment, on the model of the Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(MONUSCO), of an intervention force to be deployed in the northern part of Mali to assist in the fight against the terrorist and criminal groups and facilitate the successful completion of the ongoing stabilization efforts.

14. Participants acknowledged the seriousness of the security threat posed by the terrorist and criminal groups, both for Mali, including with regard to the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers Process, and for the entire region. In this context, participants stressed the need for more sustained action to deal with this threat, especially given that the situation in Libya, with the rise of the "Islamic State", constitutes an aggravating factor. Participants noted the recommendations made by the African Union Commission with regard to the mandate and tasks of the proposed intervention force, as well as with regard to possible options for its establishment and coordination mechanisms with other forces present on the ground. They expressed preference for the option of an African mission benefiting from a logistical support package funded by United Nations assessed contributions, along the lines of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

15. Recalling the Declaration of the Nouakchott Summit and noting that MINUSMA is not mandated to conduct counter-terrorism operations, as well as the need for the region, with the support of the international community, to play a more important role in the fight against terrorism and organized crime, participants agreed on the following with regard to the possible establishment of an intervention force in the northern part of Mali:

- the need for a proper understanding of the current threat and its possible evolution, as well as for adequate intelligence, in order to design the proposed force on the basis of the tasks expected of it. In this regard, participants requested the African Union Commission, in coordination with ECOWAS, the United Nations and the countries of the region, to facilitate a mission to assess the situation on the ground, before the end of the month of September 2015; and

- the organization by the African Union, by mid-October 2015 at the latest, of a meeting of experts from the countries of the region, to which the United Nations and other relevant international partners would be invited, to develop a concept of operation and other operational-level documents, with a view to enabling the relevant African Union organs to pronounce themselves on the issue of the force and take appropriate decisions.

16. Participants agreed on the need, in parallel to the efforts on the possible establishment of an intervention force in the northern part of Mali, to strengthen the operational capacity of MINUSMA. They agreed on the following measures:

- support to the troop-contributing countries to mobilize the equipment they need to meet the required standards;

- strengthening of the participation of MINUSMA in the meetings of the HISS, as well as of operational coordination, including the reciprocal secondment of Liaison Officers; and

- facilitation of the opening of alternative land supply routes for MINUSMA, considering the increase in asymmetric attacks against the convoys of the Mission in Mali.

17. Participants also stressed the importance of strengthening the capacity of the Malian defence and security forces, particularly as regards equipment and training, to enable them to play a leading role in the fight against the scourge of terrorism and organized crime. In this respect, they commended the work of the European Union Training Mission and urged the European Union to enhance its support through the programme "Train and Equip". They called upon the African Union Member States to contribute actively to this process, as well as to the reform of the defence and security sector provided for in the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

18. Participants welcomed the Algerian proposal on the establishment in Tessalit, in the northern part of Mali, of a regional training and familiarization centre for combat in the desert, in support of the member States of the Nouakchott Process. They called for the early operationalization of this centre.

On the operationalization of the African Standby Force, ongoing African Union missions and other related activities

19. The Commission provided an update on the operationalization process of the African Standby Force, with the organization, in October/November 2015, in South Africa, of the AMANI AFRICA II Field Training Exercise, to validate the attainment of full operational capability for the Force and its Rapid Deployment Capacity. The Commission also provided an update on the ongoing African Union missions (notably AMISOM and the Regional Task Force against the Lord's Resistance Army), as well as on the Project on Enhanced Small Arms and Light Weapons Control and Physical Protection and Stockpile Management in the Sahel region, launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 15 May 2015, in collaboration with the relevant regional economic communities and with the support of international partners.

Follow-up and next meeting

20. Participants requested the African Union Commission, working with the concerned stakeholders, to ensure the necessary follow-up and to submit these conclusions to the Peace and Security Council, for information and support. They agreed to hold their next meeting, jointly with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, ahead of the second Summit of the Nouakchott Process, scheduled to take place in N'Djamena, Chad, at a date to be determined by mutual agreement between the Government of Chad and the African Union Commission.

Acknowledgment

21. Participants expressed their deep appreciation to the Malian authorities for their warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the successful conduct of their deliberations. They expressed appreciation to President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita for his continued commitment to peace, security and stability in Mali and in the region as a whole.

Enclosure II

Communiqué of the 526th meeting, held at ministerial level, of the Peace and Security Council, Addis Ababa, 24 July 2015

PSC/MIN/COMM.(DXXVI)

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 526th meeting held at ministerial level, on 24 July 2015, having officially received the report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS), and following an extensive exchange of views thereon, adopted the following decision:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the report of the AUCISS and of the Separate Opinion submitted by a member of the AUCISS, as well as of the introductory remarks made by the Commissioner for Peace and Security. Council **further takes note** of the statements made by the representatives of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as by the representatives of Tanzania, on the internal dialogue within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and Rwanda, in its capacity as a member of the African Union High-level Ad Hoc Committee on South Sudan, established pursuant to communiqué PSC/PR/COMM(CDLXXIV), adopted at its 474th meeting, held on 5 December 2014;

2. **Reiterates the African Union's deep concern** at the situation prevailing in South Sudan, marked by continued fighting and attacks against civilian populations and other serious human rights abuses, as well as by a dire humanitarian crisis, including forced displacement, acute food insecurity, access restrictions and other impediments to humanitarian assistance. Council, **once again, condemns in the strongest terms** all the violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 23 January 2014 committed by the parties, as well as the attacks and other egregious acts of violence and abuses of human rights. Council **also condemns** the attacks against civilians and other acts of violence and harassment targeting the humanitarian agencies, including their personnel and assets;

3. **Further reiterates Africa's deep disappointment** at the continued unwillingness and lack of political will of the leaders of the warring parties to make the compromises necessary to reach an agreement that would end the conflict in their country and the untold suffering they are deliberately inflicting on their own people. Council **expresses shock and outrage** at the level of violence and cruelty meted out by the South Sudanese protagonists on the civilian population and the disregard of the South Sudanese leaders to the suffering of their own people;

4. **Demands** that the armed belligerents immediately and fully respect the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and end, once for all, all acts of violence, and **agrees**, should this become necessary, to deploy an African force to bring the ongoing tragedy in South Sudan to a definite end;

5. **Commends** the Chairperson of IGAD and the other leaders of the region for their sustained efforts in facilitating a negotiated political solution to the conflict in South Sudan, including through the establishment of the IGAD Plus mechanism, and **reiterates the African Union's support** to these efforts, including through the High-level Ad Hoc Committee on South Sudan and the High Representative for

South Sudan, former President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali. Council **also reiterates the African Union's support** to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as to the IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM), and **demands once again** that the parties fully cooperate with UNMISS and the MVM to enable them effectively to discharge their respective mandates;

6. **Reiterates the African Union's support** to the steps taken towards the implementation of the Arusha Agreement of 21 January 2015, and **welcomes** the efforts of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi of Tanzania and the African National Congress of South Africa in this regard, aimed at reuniting the SPLM, and the subsequent return to South Sudan of the former political detainees;

7. **Recalls** communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.1(CDXI)-Rev.1 adopted at its 411th meeting, held in Banjul, The Gambia, on 30 December 2013, in particular paragraph 8, in which it requested the Chairperson of the Commission, in consultation with the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant African Union structures, to establish urgently a commission to investigate the human rights violations and other abuses committed during the armed conflict in South Sudan and make recommendations on the best ways and means to ensure accountability, reconciliation and healing among all South Sudanese communities;

8. **Further recalls** its subsequent pronouncements on this issue, including communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.3(CDXLII) adopted at its 442nd meeting held on 17 June 2014, communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.1(CDLXXXIV) adopted at its 484th meeting, held on 29 January 2015, and communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.1(DXV) adopted at its 515th meeting, held on 13 June 2015;

9. **Reaffirms** the African Union's commitment to a comprehensive approach to the issues of peace, justice and reconciliation in Africa, rooted in contexts specific to each country. In this respect, Council **underlines** the continued relevance of the African Union Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, adopted by the 9th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, held in Banjul from 28 to 29 June 2006. Council **further underlines** the particular relevance of communiqué PSC/MIN/COMM.(CCCLXXXIII) on the theme "National reconciliation: critical factor for security, stability and development in Africa", adopted at its 383rd meeting held in Algiers, Algeria, on 29 June 2013, as well as of decision Assembly/AU/Dec.501(XXII), adopted by the Assembly of the Union at its 22nd Ordinary Session, held in Addis Ababa from 30 to 31 January 2014, declaring 2014-2024 as the Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade of Reconciliation in Africa;

10. **Further reaffirms** the commitment of the African Union to combat impunity, in line with article 4 (o) of the African Union Constitutive Act and the relevant provisions of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union;

11. **Expresses its conviction** that the achievement of lasting peace and reconciliation in South Sudan requires a holistic approach addressing in a mutually-supportive way the interrelated issues of accountability, reconciliation, healing and institutional reform, based on ownership by the South Sudanese stakeholders and robust African and international support. Council **further expresses its conviction** on the need to promote an African solution to the challenges at hand, as opposed to a "one-size-fits-all" remedy packaged as universal, to further an approach rooted in the understanding of the South Sudanese context, including the multiple historical,

political, moral and economic causes that led to the prevailing situation, on the understanding that those who have committed crimes, irrespective of their status and level of responsibility, shall be held accountable for their acts;

12. **Notes** that in the Agreement on the Principles on Transitional Arrangements Towards Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan, signed in Addis Ababa on 25 August 2014, and in the document titled Areas of Agreement on the Establishment of the Transitional Government of National Unity, signed in Addis Ababa on 1 February 2015, the Parties, namely the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM/IO), have addressed issues relating to impunity, justice, accountability and reconciliation;

13. **Congratulates** the Chair of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, former President Olusegun Obasanjo, and the other members of the Commission, namely Honourable Sophia Akuffo, Ms. Bineta Diop, Professor Mahmood Mamdani and Professor Pacifique Manirakiza, for their hard work and commitment in the discharge of their mandate;

14. **Expresses appreciation** to IGAD, the countries of the region, the United Nations and other international stakeholders for the cooperation extended to the AUCISS;

15. **Agrees**, following submission to Council of the report of the AUCISS and of the Separate Opinion, on the following steps to expedite the in-depth consideration of the recommendations contained therein and their subsequent implementation:

(i) Establishment by Council of an ad hoc subcommittee, comprising Algeria, Chad, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, to consider the report of the AUCISS and the Separate Opinion and make recommendations on the way forward;

(ii) Submission by the ad hoc subcommittee of its report, along with recommendations on the way forward, to all members of Council by the third week of August 2015;

(iii) Meeting of Council, at the level of the Heads of State and Government, by the end of August 2015, to consider the recommendations of the ad hoc subcommittee and take the required decisions;

16. **Further invites** the Chairperson of the Commission to formally transmit the present communiqué to the South Sudanese stakeholders, as well as to the United Nations Security Council and other African Union partners, in order to enlist their support;

17. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

Enclosure III

Communiqué of the 539th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, Addis Ababa, 25 August 2015

PSC/PR/COMM.(DXXXIX)

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 539th meeting, held on 25 August 2015, adopted the following decision on the activities of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the report of the AUHIP on its activities [PSC/PR/2.(DXXXIX)] and of the briefing of the Chairperson of the Panel, former President Thabo Mbeki, on its ongoing efforts to engage with the Government of the Republic of Sudan, political parties and armed movements in support of the peaceful resolution of conflicts in, and democratization of, Sudan, and to support the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement of 27 September 2012 between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. Council **further takes note** of the statement made by the representative of the Government of the Republic of Sudan;

2. **Recalls** its earlier communiqués and press statements on the implementation of the various aspects of the mandate of the AUHIP and other related African Union efforts, including communiqués PSC/AHG/COMM/2(CCCXCVII), PSC/AHG/COMM/1.(CCCLIII) and PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLVI), adopted at its 353rd, 397th and 456th meetings, held on 25 January and 23 September 2013, and on 12 September 2014, respectively;

3. **Commends** the AUHIP and its members, namely, former Presidents Thabo Mbeki, Abdulsalami Abubakar and Pierre Buyoya, and the support staff for their patient and unwavering engagement with Sudan, dating back to the establishment of the African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD) in July 2008 [PSC/MIN/COMM(CXLII)], and **underlines** that the exceptional commitment of the African Union as a whole, and the AUHIP in particular, reflects the profound commitment of the Continent to assist the Sudanese nation to fulfil its potential. Council **also commends** the Chair of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, for his continued engagement and support to the efforts of the AUHIP and commitment to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Horn of Africa region;

4. **Expresses appreciation** for the important role of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Haile Menkerios, the Acting Joint Special Representative, Abiodun Bashua, and the Special Envoy of IGAD, Lissane Yohannes, in their overall efforts aimed at achieving peace, security and stability in the region, and **notes with satisfaction** the exemplary cooperation between them and the AUHIP. Council **also expresses appreciation** for the support and assistance extended to the AUHIP by the African Union bilateral and multilateral partners;

5. **Welcomes** the continuing engagement and support of the State of Qatar in the search for peace in Darfur, in particular its significant financial contribution for the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and the Darfur

Development Strategy, as well as the alleviation of the suffering of the population of Darfur, including the internally displaced persons;

6. **Recalls** that the report of the AUPD, as adopted by its 207th meeting, held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 29 October 2009 [communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.1(CCVII)], whose analysis is the foundation of the African Union's policy on Sudan, concludes that the Sudanese crisis in Darfur can be resolved only in a holistic manner, within the context of a comprehensive national process which addresses Sudan's challenges, including the challenge of democratization;

7. **Reiterates its support** for the National Dialogue announced by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in January 2014, and **affirms** the principle adopted by the Sudanese parties that the National Dialogue should be an all-inclusive Sudanese process intended to address and resolve the longstanding challenges faced by the Sudanese nation and based on the agenda of peace and national unity, the economy, basic rights and freedoms, national identity, constitutional review and governance and international relations. Council **notes** that the objectives of the National Dialogue are consistent with the principles espoused in the AUPD report;

8. **Reminds** the Sudanese parties of their commitment to establish an environment conducive to the organization of the Dialogue, including through the adoption of confidence-building measures as endorsed and reflected in communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLVI) (paras. 14 and 15), which reiterates the Sudanese parties' consensus on the steps required to hold a credible dialogue within Sudan. Council also **reminds** the Sudanese parties of the African Union's commitment to leverage financial and economic assistance from the international community for the stabilization of the economy of Sudan, as part of the package of support associated with the National Dialogue process;

9. **Observes** that the National Dialogue was conceived as an all-inclusive exercise which would command the confidence of all the Sudanese people. Council **reiterates** the necessity for an adequate and all-inclusive preparation of the dialogue process, as envisaged in the 5 September 2014 Agreement on the National Dialogue and Constitutional Process signed by the Sudanese stakeholders and endorsed by Council;

10. **Notes** the statement made by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir that the Government of Sudan is ready to observe a two-month ceasefire in order to create the necessary confidence for all stakeholders, including representatives of the armed movements, to join the National Dialogue process, and **further notes** the commitment made by President al-Bashir to grant amnesty to members of the armed movements to enable them to attend the National Dialogue in safety;

11. **Acknowledges** the commitment and readiness of the armed movements to continue their engagement with the Government of Sudan to negotiate an end to the armed conflicts in Sudan;

12. **Commends** the tireless efforts of the AUHIP in seeking to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Two Areas between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which is a manifestation of the Sudanese crisis and, in this regard, **notes** that, as reflected in the draft Framework Agreement of December 2014, the negotiations have already yielded substantial consensus capable of forming the basis for the resolution of that conflict;

13. **Further commends** the efforts of the AUHIP and the Acting Joint Special Representative to facilitate negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements, within the context of the agreed one-process-two-track approach to end all violent conflicts in Sudan;

14. **Notes with deep disappointment and concern** that, despite the decisions and encouragement of Council, the more than six years of unparalleled efforts of the AUHIP, as well as the support offered by the international community, the fundamental challenges of the Sudanese nation remain unresolved and insufficient progress has been made in the implementation of the Roadmap for the National Dialogue and in the efforts to end Sudan's long-running conflicts;

15. **Reiterates** the importance for the region and the continent of the resolution of the crisis of Sudan, and the particular responsibility the Government of Sudan bears for taking the lead in ensuring a credible and genuinely all-inclusive National Dialogue and democratic transformation of the country;

16. **Expresses its grave concern** about the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Darfur and the Two Areas, including the reported violations of humanitarian law associated with the conflict, and **calls upon** the parties to urgently reach agreements to facilitate and allow humanitarian assistance to reach those in need, and to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. Council **calls upon** the parties to take all necessary measures to create conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of the displaced persons and refugees to their homes;

17. **Notes** that stopping the conflicts is an absolute requirement for the National Dialogue to proceed;

18. **Reiterates** its endorsement of the work of the AUHIP to ensure harmonized and focused action in support of the efforts of the Sudanese stakeholders to address the challenges confronting their country, including through support for negotiations to end the conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas, and the efforts to organize a credible National Dialogue;

19. **Strongly urges** the Sudanese parties, especially the Government of Sudan, to demonstrate the necessary leadership and recommitment to processes necessary for achieving the goal of realizing the democratic transformation of Sudan, especially through the organization of an all-inclusive, transparent, adequately prepared and credible National Dialogue. Council **expresses its conviction** that without progress on the above issues, the immense challenges facing Sudan, including the humanitarian crises, will not be overcome;

20. **Calls upon** the Government of Sudan and all concerned parties to cooperate with the AUHIP in all aspects of its mandate. Council, accordingly:

(i) **calls upon** the Government of Sudan to desist from any actions that would undermine confidence in the process or jeopardize the possibility of holding a credible and all-inclusive National Dialogue within Sudan;

(ii) **reiterates its call** for an urgent pre-National Dialogue meeting of all relevant parties, at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, to discuss and agree on procedural matters relating to the Dialogue;

(iii) **requests** the AUHIP to continue its engagement with the Government of Sudan and the other Sudanese stakeholders in support of their efforts to

realize an all-inclusive, transparent and credible National Dialogue, and, in this regard, **urges** all parties to extend the fullest cooperation to the Panel;

(iv) **further urges** the parties to reinvigorate their efforts to stop the wars in Darfur and the Two Areas, and **requests** the AUHIP, in line with Council's previous decisions, to continue to facilitate negotiations to stop the war and inter-communal violence in Darfur and the war in the Two Areas;

(v) **reaffirms its determination** to assist all the Sudanese parties with regard to the National Dialogue and the search for peace in Sudan, with a view to taking such additional decisions and actions as may be necessary to help ensure that the goal of the democratic transformation of Sudan is not derailed and, in particular, that an all-inclusive and credible Sudanese National Dialogue is organized; and

(vi) **requests** the AUHIP to report to Council, within 90 days of this decision, on the re-engagement of the Sudanese stakeholders with the processes towards an all-inclusive and credible National Dialogue as envisaged in the Roadmap and the necessary efforts for bringing to an end the conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas;

21. **Calls upon** the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to continue the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement in order to establish peaceful and cooperative relations between them, and **requests** the AUHIP to continue its facilitation role regarding the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement;

22. **Calls upon** the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan, with the support of the AUHIP, to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, and **urges** the two parties to cooperate with the Panel in this regard. Council **commends** the members of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mission (JBVMM) for their efforts towards the implementation of their mandate, in support of the security arrangements between Sudan and South Sudan. Council **calls upon** Sudan and South Sudan to extend full cooperation to the JBVMM for the implementation of its mandate;

23. **Reaffirms** the continued relevance of the Agreement on the Temporary Security and Administrative Arrangements for the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011, and its previous decisions on the situation in the Abyei Area. Council **commends** the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for its outstanding contribution to peace in the Abyei Area, and **demands** that the parties extend full cooperation to UNISFA;

24. **Expresses appreciation** for the reconvening of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) from 28 to 29 March 2015, following an extended period during which it did not convene, and **encourages** the AJOC to meet regularly to carry out its important mandate with respect to Abyei;

25. **Calls upon** the parties to cooperate with each other towards stabilizing the situation in the Abyei Area, promoting harmonious co-existence between the communities of Abyei, including by convening the Inter-Communal Conference as planned and ensuring the implementation of the outstanding administrative and security elements of the Temporary Arrangements Agreement;

26. **Commends** the work of the African Union Border Programme in assisting the parties to implement the Agreement on Border Issues and to strengthen their capacity to manage border issues;

27. **Appreciates** the tireless efforts of the African Union Team of Experts (AUTE) on the Disputed Border Areas, chaired by Judge Abdulkadir Koroma of Sierra Leone, in engaging the parties in fulfilment of its mandate to provide a non-binding Opinion on the status of the disputed areas, and **urges** the parties to cooperate with the AUTE. Council **requests** the AUHIP to provide, at the next convenient occasion, a report on the status of the cooperation of the parties with the AUTE;

28. **Recalls** the support expressed by the Assembly of the Union and the endorsement by Council of the Joint Approach by Sudan, South Sudan and the AUHIP for comprehensive debt relief, the lifting of sanctions against Sudan, and development support for South Sudan, and **requests** the AUHIP to continue to support efforts that may be required in this context;

29. **Recalls** paragraph 16 of communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM/2.(CCCXCVII) regarding the need to promote a regional and holistic approach to the challenges of peace, security, stability and development in the Horn of Africa in support of the IGAD efforts, in which Council requested the AUHIP, in close consultation with the IGAD Chair and Secretariat, to contribute to the promotion of such an approach, which would involve the convening of a conference on peace, security, stability, cooperation and development in the Horn of Africa, and to undertake the required consultations with IGAD and its Chairperson. Council **stresses** the importance and urgency of this approach, and **invites** the Panel to expedite its consultations on the matter, with a view to submitting to Council a progress report by November 2015;

30. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.